

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

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S E C R E T SAIGON 3775

EXDIS

FOL TEL SENT ACTION, USDAO SAIGON FM NHA TRANG

30 MAR:

QUOTE S E C R E T NHA TRANG 0234

EXDIS

DAO FOR AOSOP-IX/AOSAP-ISM

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, VS

SUBJECT: MILITARY SITUATION, MR-2

1. BINH DINH:

(A) HEAVY CONTACT PERSISTED -- ESPECIALLY IN THE BINH KHE AREA -- ON MARCH 29 AND THE MORNING OF MARCH 30. FOR THE FIRST TIME, COMMUNIST TANKS WERE SPOTTED NEAR BINH KHE (AT BR 800386); ARTILLERY WAS CALLED IN AGAINST THE 4 TANKS, BUT THE RESULTS WERE NOT REPORTED. (RLO NHA TRANG COMMENTS THAT THE 22ND FEELS IT WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY IF THE COMMUNISTS BRING IN MANY TANKS, SINCE THE 22ND REPORTEDLY LACKS ADEQUATE ANTI-TANK WEAPONS). GVN FORCES ALSO SPOTTED A COMMUNIST V-100 ARMORED VEHICLE AT BR 850410 NEAR PHU CAT: ARTILLERY WAS CALLED IN BUT THE RESULTS WERE NOT REPORTED.

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AT BR 817363 NEAR BINH KHE, THE COMMUNISTS LAUNCHED AT/3 ROCKETS

AT THE 2ND/14TH ARMORED CAV GROUP DESTROYING ONE APC AND DAMAGING ANOTHER. FINALLY, AT 292300, NUMEROUS 105 AND 107 ROUNDS HIT PHU CAT AIRBASE; ONE A-37 AIRCRAFT WAS REPORTED DESTROYED.

(B) BASED ON A CONVERSATION WITH COLONEL CHUONG, CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE 22ND DIV, OUR PROV REP IN BINH DINH HAS SUBMITTED THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION. 25 DAYS OF COMBAT HAS TAKEN A TOLL ON THE MORALE OF GVN SOLDIERS IN BINH DINH, WHO ARE OUTNUMBERED ABOUT 2 TO 1 BY THE COMMUNISTS. (THE COMMUNISTS HAVE 4 MAIN FORCE REGTS IN SOUTHERN BINH DINH AS AGAINST THE GVN'S TWO; THE COMMUNIST REGTS ARE THE 2ND, 12TH AND 141ST OF THE 3RD DIV, AND ANOTHER UNIDENTIFIED REGT, POSSIBLY THE 95B REGT OR A REGT FROM THE 968TH DIV.) THE 22ND DIV HAS ADEQUATE AIR SUPPORT IN BINH DINH, BUT COULD USE MUCH MORE; THEY ALSO NEED MORE 60 AND 81-MM AMMO (WHICH REPORTEDLY IS ON ITS WAY BY SHIP). GVN SUCCESS IN BINH DINH HINGES ON REINFORCEMENTS -- AT A MINIMUM, THE 22ND DIV WANTS ITS 40TH REGT BACK. AT PRESENT THE 41ST AND 42ND REGTS -- WHOSE MORALE IS BETTER THAN THAT OF THE TERRITORIALS (WHO BADLY NEED MORE AIR SUPPORT) -- ARE HOLDING THEIR POSITIONS EAST AND JUST WEST OF BINH KHE DISTRICT TOWN. HOWEVER, THE PROVINCE CHIEF FEELS THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO HOLD FOR MORE THAN ANOTHER WEEK. THE 141ST HAS ITS CP ON HIGH GROUND 12-15 KM NW OF PHU CAT AIRBASE; THE 2ND IS EAST OF BINH KHE TOWN ON BOTH SIDES OF THE HIGHWAY; THE 12TH IS WEST OF THE TOWN ON BOTH SIDES OF THE HIGHWAY; AND THERE MAY BE SOME NVA TANKS IN THE VINH THANH VALLEY. THE NVA IS BUILDING HEAVY-DUTY ROAD VIC BR 640450 TO SUPPORT THEIR UNITS IN BINH KHE BETTER.

(C) BOTH THE MILITARY AND PROVINCE HOSPITALS IN QUI NHON ARE VIRTUALLY CLOSED. (ON MARCH 30 II CORPS COMMANDER MG PHU ORDERED THAT THE MILITARY HOSPITAL BE REOPENED.) THE RADIO AND TV STATIONS AND ALL BANKS ARE ALSO CLOSED. GVN AGENCIES SUCH AS THE FINANCE OFFICE AND THE SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICE ARE ALSO VIRTUALLY CLOSED. 50 PERCENT OF THE PSDF AND 80 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL POLICE HAVE DESERTED IN QUI NHON. AIR VIETNAM HAS EVACUATED ITS EMPLOYEES AND WILL NOT FLY IN OR OUT OF QUI NHON ANY MORE.

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2. TUYEN DUC:

A) YESTERDAY (MARCH 29) REGIONAL FORCE BNS OF TUYEN DUC CONDUCTED AN OFFENSIVE OPERATION IN DI LINH IN LAM DONG PROVINCE. THE TOWN OF DI LINH WAS REOCCUPIED AND THERE ARE NOW TWO RF BNS THERE. THE 204TH RF BN IS AT VN 815813 AND THE 244TH RF BN IS AT AN 843842. THE 277TH RF BN WILL BE LIFTED TO THOSE LOCATIONS TODAY, FROM WHERE GVN FORCES MAY TRY TO MOVE BACK INTO

BAO LOC. IN YESTERDAY'S OPERATION, ONE NVA OF THE 14TH BN OF THE 209 REGT, 7TH DIV (MR-3) WAS CAPTURED ALONG WITH A NUMBER OF VERY IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS. THIS TENDS TO CONFIRM EARLIER REPORTS THAT THE NVA 7TH DIV HAS ENTERED THE FRAY IN II CORPS. CASUALTIES WERE 19 NVA KIA AND 1 GVN KIA.

B) THE GVN LOST CONTACT WITH ITS FORCES IN DAM RONG (WHICH IS ON THE DARLAC BORDER) AT 291900 HRS. AT 300600 HRS THE COMMANDING OFFICER FROM DAM RONG REPORTED THAT HE HAD BEEN OVERRUN BY TWO NVA BNS (WHO ARRIVED IN 8 MOLOTOVA TRUCKS). COMMENT: PROVINCE AUTHORITIES DO NOT BELIEVE THIS STORY: THEY BELIEVE THAT THERE WAS NO ATTACK ON DAM RONG AND THAT THE COMMANDER THERE WITHDREW BECAUSE OF PANIC.

3. KHANH HOA:

(A) MILITARY ACTION PICKED UP CONSIDERABLY IN KHANH DUONG DISTRICT ON MARCH 29; IT APPEARS THAT THE COMMUNISTS ARE ATTEMPTING TO FLANK THE 3RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE'S POSITIONS. THE COMMUNISTS LAUNCHED NUMEROUS SMALL ABF'S AND GROUND ATTACKS AGAINST THE AIRBORNE IN THE CAO PASS AREA (THE SOUTHERN-MOST CONTACT TOOK PLACE AT BP 643930). ONE A-37 JET SUPPORTING GVN GROUND UNITS WAS SHOT DOWN AT BQ 595105 (THE PILOT BAILED OUT TO SAFETY).

(B) THE 2ND/8TH ARMORED CAV GROUP WILL MOVE FROM PHAN RANG TO KHANH HOA TODAY.

4. CAM RANH: 7,600 GVN SOLDIERS FROM DANANG ARRIVED IN CAM RANH TODAY (MARCH 30). A TOTAL OF 14,000 ARE EXPECTED TO ARRIVE TODAY, INCLUDING 9,000 MARINES. IT IS NOT KNOWN WHETHER THE TROOPS WILL BE DEPLOYED IN MR-2.

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5. BINH THUAN: VC UNITS ARE REPORTED ATTEMPTING TO INFILTRATE PHAN THIET CITY AND COMMUNIST UNITS LAST NIGHT BROADCAST MESSAGES TO THE PEOPLE OF PHAN THIET TELLING THEM TO FLEE THE CITY AND GO TO THE COUNTRYSIDE BECAUSE THE CITY WOULD SOON BE CAPTURED. REPORTEDLY THERE IS A DEGREE OF PANIC IN PHAN THIET CITY AS A RESULT OF THIS. THE PROVINCE CHIEF REPORTS THAT NVA FORWARD SUPPLY ELEMENTS HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN ESTABLISHED 30 KM NW OF PHAN THIET; NO COMBAT UNITS HAVE BEEN SIGHTED AS YET.

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